

**Monday 11/23/20**

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Beltway Blunder: Washington Post Quickly Renames Story on DC's Political 'Aristocracy' by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

In a year that's featured guillotines at protests and ever-increasing consciousness of social wealth disparities, perhaps deliberately invoking a term that means "rule by the best" wasn't the most politically savvy move.

In a stunning moment of honesty, the Washington Post's editors dropped a story about the attitudes of the US "aristocracy" toward a potential new Joe Biden administration.

With US President Donald Trump losing one state ballot count legal challenge after another, it seems increasingly likely that when the Electoral College's electors from each state meet next month to cast their official votes for US president, it's Biden who will come out on top. That has the country's sociopolitical crème de la crème preparing for a White House whose doors will once again be open to their influences - and being a bit too honest about their enthusiasm.

"Washington's aristocracy hopes a Biden presidency will make schmoozing great again," read the original headline of [a Monday story by Roxanne Roberts in the DC paper's Style section](#).

However, not long after the story went up, someone clearly realized the horrible optics of the headline and quickly changed it to say "Washington's establishment" instead.

After all, it was only a few months ago that protesters demonstrating against Amazon CEO - and Washington Post owner - Jeff Bezos' [record profit-making amid skyrocketing poverty under the COVID-19 pandemic](#) brought to his DC abode a facsimile of a guillotine, the French Revolution-era head-chopping device on which many an 18th-century marquis met their gruesome end.

Despite the headline shift, the text of the article continues to refer to "the aristocracy of this city," noting the elite policy influencers in a city that voted 93% for Democratic candidate Biden earlier this month are delighted at the idea of being able to flex those lobbyist muscles once more.

One "influential Republican hostess quoted in the story - who notably spoke anonymously - told the paper that the Bidens "know how to get around Washington, how to be a part of the establishment, how to make it work for them in their everyday lives. People who have always enjoyed the Washington scene are yearning to get back to that, have some semblance of what they enjoyed so much before. There are a lot of Republicans who sat out the Trump years and bit their tongues for four years who are thrilled to have Biden."

However, it's not the would-be Jacobins that these patricians seem to fear: according to the story, it's another four years with a chief executive who spurns their parlors' rarified air.

"For the last four years, the tone from the White House was contemptuous of Washington, dismissing the permanent establishment - the longtime politicians and former administration officials who call it home - as the 'swamp' or 'deep state,'" the Post opines. "The social arbiters, traditionally respectful of a new administration, quickly found themselves between a Trump and a hard place: To invite or not to invite?"

"Washington never forgets, sometimes forgives, and carries on," the Post notes. However, the Post isn't the only paper worried about the opinions of US elites in a post-President Trump world. Earlier this month, [a CNN story speculated about the future social life](#) of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, noting that "Jared and Ivanka are poised to return to a Manhattan social scene that no longer welcomes them." Then on Friday, [the New York Times ran a story elaborating on the likelihood](#) of Ivanka getting kicked out of galas and being forced to buy clothes at retail in New York, "where the performative distaste for the couple is unsurpassed," after she and her husband went to work as unofficial advisers for her father in the White House.

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Saudi Arabia Confirms Houthi Missile Attack on Jeddah Oil Station, No Casualties Reported by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Saudi state media reported Monday that a fire had broken out in North Jeddah after a terrorist attack at a Saudi Aramco petroleum distribution station.

The Saudi Press Agency reported the fire was the "result of a terrorist attack with a projectile" and that fire fighting crews had successfully extinguished the fire. Petroleum supplies were not affected by the attack.

[Earlier on Monday, Brig. Gen. Yahia Sarea, a spokesperson](#) for Yemen's Houthi movement, with which Saudi Arabia has been at war since 2015, announced the attack had taken place, noting it was carried out with a new Quds-2 "winged missile." The Quds-1 is a type of suicide drone.

Saudi Brig. Gen. [Turki Al-Maliki, a spokesperson for the Saudi-led coalition](#) fighting the Houthis, said the attack "does not target the national capabilities of the Kingdom, but rather targets the nerve of the global economy and its supplies as well as global energy security."

The attack follows another earlier this month [against a Saudi oil platform near Jizan, in the Red Sea](#) near the border with Yemen, and two last year in Abqaiq and Khourais that paralyzed Saudi oil production for several days in Eastern Province. The latter has been claimed by the Houthis, [but while a Saudi investigation was inconclusive](#) as to who was responsible, [US intelligence quickly and firmly pointed the finger at Iran](#), claiming the Islamic Republic had directly carried out the suicide drone attack. The Houthis have offered no comment on the Jizan attack.

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US Army's Europe, Africa Commands Unite as Rumors Swirl of Potential Somalia Withdrawal by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)



The merger will make more US Army resources available for African operations, although the Pentagon has been debating pulling nearly all of its troops from the continent for the past year. On Monday, [the US Army announced the merging of US Army Europe and US Army Africa](#) into a single combined command: US Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF). As part of the shift, US Army Africa/Southern European Task Force has also been renamed US Army Southern European Task Force, Africa.

"This consolidation enhances global and regional readiness in support of the National Defense Strategy," US Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy said in the news release. "The new structure will increase command and control effectiveness, flexibility and the capability to conduct large-scale, joint and multi-domain operations."

In army-speak, that means the two former commands will share resources. It also elevates the Army's African concerns to management by a four-star general - Maj. Gen. Andrew Rohling, who began running the de facto united command earlier this year.

[Rohling told Army Times in October the union](#) would "give us greater advocacy," since there are just 6,000 US troops in all of Africa, compared to a little less than 60,000 in Europe, [according to the new command](#).

However, even as the Army completes the command shuffle, officials in Washington are reportedly debating pulling many of the troops stationed in Africa out and moving them to other theaters.

Last week, [anonymous officials reported for the second time](#) that US President Donald Trump was considering withdrawing [most or all of the roughly 700 US troops stationed in Somalia](#), where the US has been waging an undeclared war against al-Shabaab, a terrorist group aligned with al-Qaeda, since 2007.

While Trump has cast the troop withdrawals he has ordered from countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, where the US has been engaged in occupation wars for decades, as "ending endless wars," the deeper truth is that the Pentagon wants as many troops as possible to be free for use in confronting China and Russia.

In January 2020, then-US Defense Secretary [Mark Esper told reporters he wanted to shift as many resources](#) as possible toward US Indo-Pacific Command to "support competition" with the two rising global powers.

"I said for my nomination, my aim was to implement [the National Defense Strategy](#)," Esper said. "Mission number one is compete with Russia and China."

In that document and the related [2017 National Security Strategy](#), Pentagon leaders wrote that "after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned. China and Russia began to reassert their influence regionally and globally," and the 2018 National Defense Strategy noted that "inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security."

However, little has changed on the ground since then, as [debate erupted in Congress over whether or not](#) the troops in Africa could be spared. It was even rumored that US Africa Command wanted to [expand the war in Somalia into neighboring Kenya](#). The Pentagon's 127 Echo program [aims to offer a solution of sorts, training surrogate forces](#) in partner countries to take over the patrolling and peacekeeping duties US troops remain engaged in, including fighting Daesh, al-Shabaab and other groups.



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Video: East Africa Threatened With Famine as Locust Swarms Once Again Descend on Region by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Amid a new armed conflict and subsequent refugee crisis in East Africa, a new batch of locust swarms has arisen, even further threatening the food security of millions of people.

For the third time this year, swarms of hungry grasshoppers are invading eastern Africa, endangering food supplies in a region where famine is always perilously close and a new civil war is beginning to unfold.

On Friday, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) sounded the alert that swarms were again on the move across the region, threatening crops in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania.

"Breeding continues in central Somalia and eastern Ethiopia where hopper bands are present, and a new generation of immature swarms will start forming by the end of this month. Swarm formation will continue throughout December because of widespread hatching and band formation that occurred this past week," [the FAO wrote](#). [The group noted that strong northeasterly winds are carrying the flying insects further than normal.](#)

"From the second week of December onwards, several waves of numerous swarms can be expected to move south in Somalia and Ethiopia, reaching northern Kenya," the FAO added. Video and photos from the area show the ground covered in millions of brown grasshoppers driven into a swarming phase by a combination of weather and crowding, and cropland shredded by their ravenous collective hunger.

Etienne Peterschmitt, the FAO's representative in Somalia, [told Xinhua News Agency on Saturday](#) the organization's efforts to track and inhibit the ravenous grasshopper swarms had also been majorly stepped up.

"These resources include aircraft, vehicles, equipment, biopesticides, insect growth regulators and staff that have been strategically positioned in various parts of the country," he said in a statement.

Somali Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Said Hussein lid told Xinhua that the increase in locust swarms was the worst the country had seen in decades.

"However, since this protracted crisis started in December 2019, Somalia's capacity to respond has been strengthened thanks to concerted efforts by the government and FAO," he said.

[According to Africa News](#), [even a small swarm of locusts](#) can eat as much grain in a day as 35,000 people could. In a prior locust period between January and April, swarms destroyed 1.3 million hectares of grazing land and nearly 200,000 hectares of crops, resulting in the loss of 350,000 tons of cereals.

The risk of famine is palpable. [From 2020 to 2012, more than 260,000 people died in Somalia](#) amid a severe drought said to be the worst in more than half a century and a civil war against the al-Qaeda-aligned terrorist group al-Shabaab. In Yemen, [the UN World Food Program has categorized](#) more than 20 million Yemenis as food insecure, with almost one-third of families



suffering food gaps in their diet amid an unrelenting Saudi-led war to destroy the Shiite Houthi movement.

War in Ethiopia has also created a new refugee crisis, with [tens of thousands fleeing the Tigray region into neighboring Sudan](#), crowding into refugee camps that are quickly becoming overwhelmed and short on supplies. [The UN has said it expects as many as 200,000 refugees](#) will cross the border in the next six months. Some 80% of the population of Tigray are subsistence farmers.

Meanwhile, researchers are working on new methods to predict where locust outbreaks will happen next. Scientists at the International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology believe that new computer models developed by observing swarms and the conditions that give rise to them can help farmers and governments to better target their prevention efforts in areas before they hatch into locust swarms, [according to a Sunday report by Science Times](#).

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Video: US Tests F-35's Ability to Carry Out Supersonic Nuclear Strikes Over Nevada Desert by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The stealthy F-35 will be the first supersonic fighter jet to carry the small B61-12 nuclear bomb inside an internal weapons bay, meaning it won't have to sacrifice stealthiness for striking power.

For the first time, the US military has released footage of an F-35A Joint Strike Fighter dropping inert nuclear bombs at speeds in excess of the speed of sound. Tests of actual nuclear weapons are banned under a 1996 treaty.

The footage, compiled by Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory and the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), shows an August 25 flight test at [Tonopah Test Range, part of the Nevada Test and Training Range](#) that also houses Area 51.

The video was, in turn, uploaded to YouTube by The Drive.

The Pentagon's F-35 Joint Program Office previously published photos in June of other tests at California's Edwards Air Force Base in which an F-35 also dropped dummy B61-12 nuclear bombs, noting the tests went back as far as June 2019.

"This was the first test to exercise all systems, including mechanical, electrical, communication and release between the B61-12 and the F-35A," Steven Samuels, a manager with Sandia's B61-12 Systems Team, [said in a Monday news release](#). "The latest test is a critical piece in the F-35A and B61-12 program. Aboard the newest fighter, the B61-12 provides a strong piece of the overall nuclear deterrence strategy for our country and our allies."

The B61-12 is the latest version of the B61 family of air-dropped nuclear gravity bombs, introduced in 2015. [At just 12 feet long, the variable-yield weapon can fit inside](#) the F-35's internal weapons bay, meaning like its cousin the F-22 Raptor, it won't have to sacrifice its stealthiness to carry the bomb. The B61-12 has four yield options: 0.3 kilotons, 1.5 kilotons, 10 kilotons and 50 kilotons.

The F-35 isn't the only US aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons at supersonic speeds: the F-15 Eagle and F-16 Falcon can carry the B61 bomb too, and the F-15 has already been certified to carry the new version of the bomb. The subsonic but equally stealthy B-2 Spirit can also carry the B61, but also uniquely wields the much larger B83 thermonuclear bomb.

Despite the successful tests with dummy bombs, the F-35 isn't yet certified to carry real nuclear weapons and [the aircraft's Block 4 upgrade has been delayed](#) by almost a year, until at least March 2021. The software upgrade is necessary for the aircraft's huge computer to "talk" to the bomb's computer accurately.

With the F-35 expected to pick up the role of nuclear strike aircraft for a number of NATO allies that wield US nuclear weapons under a special weapons-sharing agreement as aircraft like the Panavia Tornado are retired, that could leave a gap in which they are unable to use the bombs at their disposal.

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Pope Francis Holds Unprecedented Meeting With NBA Players to Discuss Social Justice Efforts by [Mary F.](#)

In recent months, there have been several instances of police brutality against Black Americans, including the killing of 46-year-old George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the shooting of 29-year-old Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

A delegation of five National Basketball Association (NBA) players and officials met on Monday with Pope Francis at the Vatican to discuss ways to address social justice and economic inequality following the deaths and injuries of several Black Americans at the hands of police.

The visit, which took place in the Apostolic Palace, was arranged after the Vatican extended an invitation to the players' union, the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA); the pope recently expressed interest in learning more about the players' social justice activities, the union said. Executive Director of the NBPA Michele Roberts and players Kyle Korver, Sterling Brown, Anthony Tolliver, Marco Belinelli and Jonathan Isaac joined the meeting.

During the meeting, the players discussed social efforts they are involved in related to the Black Lives Matter Movement and also offered the pope a book that outlines many of their community and social initiatives as well as an Orlando Magic jersey and a Black Lives Matter T-shirt.

"We are extremely honored to have had this opportunity to come to the Vatican and share our experiences with Pope Francis," Korver said, according to a [news release from the NBPA](#). "His openness and eagerness to discuss these issues was inspiring and a reminder that our work has had a global impact and must continue moving forward."

Both Brown and Korver were players who refused to take part in scheduled basketball games for the Milwaukee Bucks in August after the shooting of Blake, as a protest of police brutality. The wave of protests also spread to other leagues, including Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and the Women's National Basketball Association.

During the meeting, Francis referred to the players as "champions," [AP reported](#).



"You're champions," Pope Francis said. "But also giving the example of teamwork, you've become a model, giving that good example of teamwork but always remaining humble ... and preserving your own humanity."

Since Pope Francis was elected in 2013, he has attempted to address issues of social justice, including poverty, migration and inequality.

In his [October encyclical](#) titled "Brothers All," the pope wrote that "a readiness to discard others finds expression in vicious attitudes that we thought long past, such as racism, which retreats underground only to keep reemerging."

"Instances of racism continue to shame us, for they show that our supposed social progress is not as real or definitive as we think," he added.

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Trump Endorses Move by General Services Administration to Begin US Presidential Transition Process  
by [Mary F.](#)

US President Donald Trump on Monday endorsed a move by the General Services Administration to start the US presidential transition process.

In a statement on Twitter, Trump thanked Emily Murphy, the administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA), for her "steadfast dedication and loyalty to our country," also noting that she has been "harassed, threatened and abused" throughout the US election ordeal. "I am recommending that Emily and her team do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols, and have told my team to do the same," Trump added, endorsing Murphy's submission earlier in the day to formally initiate the transition process to a Joe Biden presidency.

Following the GSA ascertainment, the Biden transition team released a statement calling Murphy's decision a "needed step to begin tackling the challenges facing our nation."

Earlier Monday, Murphy prompted the transition process, noting she did not make a decision "out of fear or favoritism."

"Please know that I came to my decision independently, based on the law and available facts," Murphy wrote in a letter addressed to Biden, which was [first obtained by CNN](#). "I was never directly or indirectly pressured by any Executive Branch official - including those who work at the White House or GSA - with regard to the substance or timing of my decision. To be clear, I did not receive any direction to delay my determination."

Murphy's formal acknowledgment of the results will release more than \$6 million to the Biden transition team, [USA Today reported](#).

Although Trump earned 232 Electoral College votes compared to Biden's 306, Trump has continued to make claims of election malfeasance, despite a [finding by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency](#) that the November 3 election was "the most secure in American history."

Allegations of voter fraud made by the Trump reelection campaign range from claims of deceased Americans submitting ballots to a miscount of ballots. In fact, since the November 3 election, the Trump camp has filed multiple lawsuits challenging results; however, many have been dismissed. The most recent lawsuit to have been rejected came from a federal judge in Pennsylvania.

Trump also noted in his tweet that despite his endorsement of Murphy's move, "our case strongly continues, we will keep up the good fight," noting that the challenges "will prevail."

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Israeli Researchers Use Gene Editing to Destroy Cancer Cells in Mice - Study  
by [Mary F.](#)

CRISPR/Cas9, or clustered regularly interspaced palindromic repeats, is a technique that involves identifying the location of mutations in genes and then using Cas9, a gene-editing enzyme, to cut and remove unwanted portions of DNA along a gene sequence.

In a recent study, researchers at Tel Aviv University (TAU) concluded that the CRISPR/Cas9 system is effective in treating metastatic cancers, which are cancers that have spread from the original site to other parts of the body.

Specifically, the researchers developed a lipid nanoparticle-based delivery system that targets cancer cells and annihilates them through genetic manipulation. The system, called CRISPR-LNPs, carries a genetic messenger, also known as messenger RNA, that encodes for Cas9, which acts as molecular scissors, [the university explained in a news release](#).

The [study](#), funded by the Israel Cancer Research Fund and published this month in the journal Science Advances, is the first to show that CRISPR/Cas9 can be used to treat cancer in living organisms.

"This is the first study in the world to prove that the CRISPR genome editing system can be used to treat cancer effectively in a living animal," study author Dan Peer said in the news release. "It must be emphasized that this is not chemotherapy. There are no side effects, and a cancer cell treated in this way will never become active again. The molecular scissors of Cas9 cut the cancer cell's DNA, thereby neutralizing it and permanently preventing replication."

The researchers tested the groundbreaking technology on mice with two deadly cancers: glioblastoma, a type of brain cancer, and metastatic ovarian cancer.

The researchers showed that a single treatment with CRISPR-LNPs doubled the average life expectancy of mice with glioblastoma tumors, increasing their survival rate by around 30%. In addition, the CRISPR-LNPs system increased the overall survival rate of mice with metastatic ovarian cancer by 80%.

"The CRISPR genome editing technology, capable of identifying and altering any genetic segment, has revolutionized our ability to disrupt, repair or even replace genes in a personalized manner," Peer explained. "Despite its extensive use in research, clinical implementation is still in its infancy because an effective delivery system is needed to safely and accurately deliver the CRISPR to its target cells. The delivery system we developed targets the DNA responsible for



the cancer cells' survival. This is an innovative treatment for aggressive cancers that have no effective treatments today."

Despite the technology being in its infancy, the study results are promising and suggest that the method could be used to treat other types of cancer, genetic diseases and even viral diseases like AIDS.

"We now intend to go on to experiments with blood cancers that are very interesting genetically, as well as genetic diseases such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy," Peer explained.

"It will probably take some time before the new treatment can be used in humans, but we are optimistic. The whole scene of molecular drugs that utilize messenger RNA (genetic messengers) is thriving - in fact, most COVID-19 vaccines currently under development are based on this principle," he added.

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Majority of Republican Voters Want Trump to Run in 2024 US Presidential Election - Survey by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Amid the ongoing contested results of the US election, rumors and calls for US President Donald Trump to run in the 2024 presidential cycle have run rampant, with a slew of former administration and campaign officials highlighting the president's chances should the 2020 election be officially called for Democratic challenger Joe Biden.

A [new survey conducted by Seven Letter Insight](#) has revealed that 66% of surveyed Republican voters want Trump to run for reelection in the 2024 presidential election, while another 38% of GOP-aligned individuals want the president to "refuse to give up power and remain in the White House."

When asked whether Trump should "contest the election in the [US] Supreme Court," 63% of Republican voters agreed with the statement, as did 40% of surveyed independents and 28% of Democrats.

Since the US media overwhelmingly called the election for Biden on November 7, Trump has repeatedly [raised allegations of voter fraud](#) with claims that deceased Americans had voted, and that votes in his favor were miscounted.

Although the Trump reelection campaign has filed several lawsuits contesting results in battleground states, many of the challenges have been rejected. Most recently a federal judge in Pennsylvania [dismissed a lawsuit](#) that sought to block the Keystone State's certification of ballots.

The survey also found that another 67% of Republicans indicated they would support Trump peacefully handing over the presidential reins to the incoming Biden administration, whereas 52% approved of the idea of Trump endorsing one of his children to run in the 2024 cycle.

In fact, Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., [prompted a stir on social media](#) ahead of the November 3 vote after sharing an image of him standing next to a banner that read "Don Jr. 2024." The banner itself was posted at the Nevada Livestock Auction.

Among other questions in the survey, 77% of Republicans indicated they wanted Trump to “help guide the Republican Party,” and another 63% of them wanted Trump to “stop using Twitter to discuss politics.”

Overall, 82% of those surveyed indicated they wanted Trump to “call for national unity.”

More than 50% of respondents also wanted Trump to “leave American politics and recede into private life” and “leave the country as he has stated he’d do on the campaign trail.”

Earlier this month, reports suggested that Trump was growing increasingly tired and frustrated with the Fox News network, especially after the conservative outlet called Arizona for Biden when vote counting was in its earlier stages. As such, sources later [revealed to Axios](#) that Trump was considering launching his own digital platform to go toe-to-toe with the Fox News machine.

When asked what Trump should do next, only 38% of the entire survey sample welcomed the idea of the president launching his own network.

The poll, which is the first nationwide survey by the group, included responses from 1,500 individuals who were polled from November 10 through November 19. According to Seven Letter Insight, the majority of the respondents identified as white, came from suburban communities and were between the ages of 45 and 64.

The breakdown in political party affiliations came down with 37% of respondents saying they identified as Republican, while 26% were independents, and 37% were Democrats. Fifty-one percent of those surveyed said they voted for Biden.

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Hundreds of Bodies From New York City’s Spring COVID-19 Surge to Remain Inside Morgue Trucks

by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City, New York, became a bustling hotspot for the deadly respiratory disease, as the Big Apple’s death toll numbered in the tens of thousands. Unable to keep up with the spikes, medical officials eventually resorted to the use of refrigerated trucks that were converted into makeshift morgues.

The bodies of hundreds of individuals who died in New York City during the spring COVID-19 surge are expected to remain inside freezer trucks due to outdated contact information for relatives and families being unable to afford the costs of an unexpected funeral.

At the height of the city’s surge, during the first three months of the pandemic, approximately 203,000 COVID-19 cases were laboratory-confirmed in the Big Apple, [according to the US’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Of the individuals who were hospitalized after contracting SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, about 32.1% died.

Citing the city’s Office of Chief Medical Examiner, [the Wall Street Journal reported](#) Sunday that roughly 650 bodies are still being stored inside the [mobile morgues](#) first established in April along Sunset Park in NYC’s Brooklyn borough.



Officials explained to the outlet that the families of about 230 deceased individuals have not been tracked down. One unidentified spokesperson suggested that the situation was not uncommon, as oftentimes next-of-kin information is either incorrect or outdated as individuals become estranged from their families over a period of time.

In other circumstances, the driving factor is a lack of funds for a burial. Although the city is offering families [burial assistance of some \\$1,700](#), the cost of a traditional, full-service burial can be closer to several thousand dollars.

The New York State Funeral Directors Association places the average cost of a traditional burial at about \$9,000, with cremation and funeral services ranging just over \$6,000, the Journal reported. However, according to the city's burial assistance program, a \$3,400 burial cost cap has been implemented, leaving families to come up with the \$1,700 balance.

Dina Maniotis, the executive deputy commissioner of the chief medical examiner's office, told the outlet that some families have also been forced to decide whether they want their loved ones buried for free on [Hart Island](#), the final resting place for over 1 million people whose bodies went unclaimed by family or by those who were not able to afford a proper burial.

"This has been traumatic," Maniotis said. "We are working with [families] as gently as we can and coaxing them along to make their plans. Many of them will decide they want to go to Hart Island, which is fine."

Although the city intends to continue the use of the refrigerated trucks until the pandemic is declared over, Maniotis did state that the agency was able to release 48 bodies from storage between September and mid-November.

The latest [figures from Johns Hopkins University](#) state that in the Empire State, over 34,000 individuals have died as a result of COVID-19, with more than 24,000 of those deaths reported in New York City.

Elsewhere in the US, [counties in Arizona and Texas](#) have also opted to use refrigerated trucks as mobile morgues after having traditional hospital morgues reach capacity.

In recent weeks cases across the US have continued to spike as officials have warned that the holiday season may likely prompt transmissions to skyrocket. Ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday in the US, [the Transportation Security Administration reported](#) that over 2 million travelers passed through security checkpoints over the weekend despite repeated calls by health officials to commit to virtual celebrations.

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Photos: Tropical Storm Eta Unearths 19th-Century Shipwreck Off Florida Coast  
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Hurricane Eta, initially rated as a Category 4 cyclone, pummeled much of Central America in early November and brought heavy rains that prompted massive flooding and landslides in the region. Declared the 28th named storm of the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season, Eta killed over 100 individuals before eventually downgrading into a tropical storm.

A combination of strong winds and heavy rains brought onto the northeast Florida coast by Tropical Storm Eta have provided archaeologists and history buffs quite the mystery after unearthing a shipwreck that officials say dates back to the 1800s.

The shocking discovery was initially on Saturday morning made by local resident Mark O'Donoghue under a dune at Crescent Beach, in Florida's St. Augustine. However, it wasn't until Sunday that the curious find prompted a call to the St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP).

Following a preliminary investigation of the site, the organization is working under the belief that the vessel may have been an American merchant ship from the 1800s, as the majority of all known shipwrecks at that time were participating in the trade business in the region.

"Everything we've seen on it so far fits that hypothesis; wooden planking, wood timbers, iron fasteners," Chuck Meide, LAMP's director, [said in a statement](#) accompanying the organization's release on the find. "They look quite similar to other ships from the 1800s that we have seen." As for figuring out the ship's name or when it may have met its end, officials say it may not be quite as easy to determine.

LAMP archaeologist Nick Budsberg [speculated to Florida station WTLV](#) that the ship may have been purposely wrecked. "It might have been at the end of its life, and they ran it up on the beach and called it a day. Or it is possible it wrecked further out to sea and a portion of the ship made it to the beach," he said.

Closer examinations of the ship have revealed that it was also burned, which has prompted officials to consider that it may have been set on fire as a way to salvage metal scraps that could be sold.

As the investigation into the wreck continues, LAMP has indicated that its team will carry on with survey work and conduct examinations of timber and ironwork samples.

"Florida's maritime past is America's story as the nation's oldest port dating back to the Spanish landing in 1565," Kathy Fleming, the executive director of the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum, said in a statement. "The St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program is committed to saving our maritime history and passing these stories on to our future generations."

Although LAMP has stated that the shipwreck itself will not be recovered from the site, the program has filed paperwork to establish a permanent barrier around the area so to prevent any disturbance of the ongoing excavation, [according to the New York Daily News](#).

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Photo: 'Sure to Get Laughs': Company Sells Window Stickers of NY Governor Watching You This Holiday  
by [Victoria Teets](#)

A company in the Empire State is offering window stickers for purchase of Democratic New York Governor Andrew Cuomo "watching over" one's Thanksgiving holiday.



[Custom716](#), a design firm based in Upstate New York's Buffalo, is selling stickers of Cuomo's face that can be put on a window to make it appear as though the governor is peering inside one's home, [the New York Post reported](#).

The item is presumably a reference to the governor repeatedly highlighting COVID-19 safety measures and asking his constituents to ensure there are no large gatherings for the holidays. Cuomo has been pleading with New Yorkers to spend Thanksgiving with those already in their households, warning that the spread of the novel coronavirus has increased in part thanks to small, indoor gatherings in recent months as the weather has grown cooler.

"It's your family, it's your home, it's your table — these are all environments where you feel safe, and that's the beauty of Thanksgiving," he said during a phone conference with reporters on Thursday. "Your safe zone is not a safe zone, your safe zone is dangerous this year."

The sticker is viewed to be a clear way of poking fun at Cuomo for demanding that New York families avoid gathering in large groups during the holiday season.

"Great for all gatherings, sure to get laughs, great for your business or your home!" - states the description regarding the \$10 Cuomo sticker on Custom716's website.

"\$10 and I will mail it to you for free, or pick up is available. Located in North Tonawanda, NY," the description reads, offering a promo code allowing customers to bypass the \$8.05 shipping and handling fee.

It is not surprising that Cuomo is urging people to not celebrate the holidays in large gatherings this year, as he was responsible for handling the immense COVID-19 response in New York, which is among the US states hit hardest by the novel coronavirus and has [recorded the highest number of deaths](#) related to the disease. Cuomo's efforts have drawn praise from many.

However, "the governor's warnings have also drawn sharp criticism from politicians and law enforcement agents across the state, who argue it's nearly impossible to enforce caps on indoor, private gatherings," notes the New York Post.

The outlet's request for comment from Custom716 was not immediately returned.

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Feinstein Vows to Not Seek Chairmanship in US Senate Following SCOTUS Hearing Blowback by [Evan Craighead](#)

Sen. Dianne Feinstein's (D-CA) decision to not pursue future Senate chairmanship comes shortly after fellow Democrats accused the 87-year-old of going rogue during Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Amy Coney Barret's confirmation hearing.

Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee for the past four years, [revealed on Monday](#) that she will "not seek the chairmanship or ranking member position in the next Congress."

"I look forward to continuing to serve as a senior Democrat on the Judiciary, Intelligence, Appropriations and Rules committees as we work with the Biden administration on priorities like gunsafety, immigration reform and addressing inequities in criminal justice. I will continue to do

my utmost to bring about positive change in the coming years," she wrote in her November 23 news release.

The 87-year-old Democrat is no stranger to criticism from fellow Democrats over her [centrist approach to legislation](#), but many liberals expressed outrage over Feinstein's decision to embrace a maskless Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) last month and thank him for leading a fair confirmation hearing for now-SCOTUS Justice Barrett.

NARAL Pro-Choice America's Ilyse Hogue, whose group opposed Barrett's appointment, slammed Feinstein for failing to expose the nominee's confirmation process was "unprecedented, shameful and wrong," [according to The Hill](#).

Brian Fallon, executive director of Demand Justice, noted that the 87-year-old's announcement comes as "a necessary step" in a long line of legislative reform.

"This was a necessary step if Democrats are ever going to meaningfully confront the damage Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell have done to the federal judiciary," he asserted, noting that the future top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee "must be led by someone who will not wishfully cling to a bygone era of civility and decorum that Republicans abandoned long ago."

Despite the recent criticism, Feinstein focused instead on issues she wishes to tackle in the near future.

"California is a huge state confronting two existential threats - wildfire and drought - that are only getting worse with climate change," she stated.

"In the next Congress, I plan to increase my attention on those two crucial issues. I also believe that defeating COVID-19, combating climate change, and protecting access to health care are critical national priorities that require even more concentration."

Feinstein has been a member of Congress since 1992 and was re-elected to the US Senate in 2018. No term limits exist for the US legislative chambers.

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South Dakota Authorities File Lawsuit Against Voter-Approved Recreational Marijuana Amendment  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

While the legalization of medical marijuana received widespread voter support in South Dakota's November 3 election, voters were nearly split on a second, potentially unconstitutional referendum that included hemp-related legislation, the regulation of recreational weed and weed taxation.

Col. Rick Miller, superintendent of the South Dakota Highway Patrol, and Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom filed a [lawsuit in the Hughes County Circuit Court](#) on Friday alleging the state violated its own constitution with the recent Constitutional Amendment A, a sweeping voter referendum that seeks to legalize and tax marijuana while also ensuring that medical marijuana is accessible and recreational weed is regulated.

The referendum also called for hemp regulation laws.



"Our constitutional amendment procedure is very straightforward," Miller said in a statement, as [reported by Dakota News Now](#). "In this case, the group bringing Amendment A unconstitutionally abused the initiative process. We're confident that the courts will safeguard the South Dakota Constitution and the rule of law."

"A proposed amendment may amend one or more articles and related subject matter in other articles as necessary to accomplish the objectives of the amendment; however, no proposed amendment may embrace more than one subject," [Article XXII Sec 1](#) of the South Dakota Constitution states.

"If more than one amendment is submitted at the same election, each amendment shall be so prepared and distinguished that it can be voted upon separately."

The lawsuit also argues that Amendment A does not amend the state constitution, but revises it. Such revisions require a three-fourths vote in each chamber of South Dakota's legislature to pass.

The legalization of medical marijuana alone was laid out in Measure 26 and passed with 70% voter approval. Amendment A, on the other hand, was a more polarizing issue and went through with support from 54% of South Dakota voters.

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, a Republican, openly condemned both marijuana ballot options following their passage.

"I was personally opposed to these measures and firmly believe they're the wrong choice for South Dakota's communities," [she said earlier this month](#).

"We need to be finding ways to strengthen our families, and I think we're taking a step backward in that effort. I'm also very disappointed that we will be growing state government by millions of dollars in costs to public safety and to set up this new regulatory system."

[Noem vetoed a bill](#) seeking to legalize hemp production last year due to "the impact it will have on public safety and law enforcement's ability to enforce drug laws," she claimed at the time, despite the fact that marijuana and hemp are two different crops.

While Noem views weed legalization as a public safety issue, those in favor of marijuana legalization argue that the policy can help South Dakotans medically, economically and socially.

"No longer will South Dakotans have to choose between obeying the law and getting relief from chronic pain, seizures, and anxiety," South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws Campaign Manager Drey Samuelson [told Dakota News Now on November 4](#), one day after votes were cast on the matter.

"And, no longer will illicit dealers and drug cartels be the folks who profit from the sale of marijuana; now it will be our state's public schools and our general fund."

South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws, which was the driving force behind Amendment A and Measure 26, has declared it is "prepared to defend Amendment A against this lawsuit."

"Our opponents should accept defeat instead of trying to overturn the will of the people.

Amendment A was carefully drafted, fully vetted, and approved by a strong majority of South Dakota voters this year," the group declared.

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'No Time to Lose': Biden Transition Team Confirms Six Cabinet Nominations Amid Election Limbo  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Despite US President Donald Trump's continued fight to expose alleged voter fraud in the 2020 US election, Joe Biden, the media's presumptive winner of the presidential race, has confirmed a total of six nominees for the potential Democrat-led Cabinet in the areas of foreign policy and national security.

Citing Biden's transition office, the [New York Times reported Monday](#) that the Democratic presidential nominee intends to nominate Alejandro Mayorkas, a fellow official from the administration of former US President Barack Obama, as secretary for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). If confirmed, the Cuban-American lawyer would be the first Latino to head the department.

Mayorkas entered the Obama administration as director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services in 2009, following a unanimous Senate confirmation vote. He was then promoted to DHS deputy secretary and held the position from 2013 to 2016.

Biden was initially slated to make this announcement and more nominations during a Tuesday address from Wilmington, Delaware. However, the Biden-Harris campaign published a statement on Monday announcing an array of Cabinet and high-level administration nominations.

"We have no time to lose when it comes to our national security and foreign policy," Biden said in a November 23 statement, [as reported by NBC News](#). "I need a team ready on Day One to help me reclaim America's seat at the head of the table, rally the world to meet the biggest challenges we face, and advance our security, prosperity, and values. This is the crux of that team."

US foreign service veteran Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who served as assistant secretary of state for African affairs between 2013 and 2017, will be nominated as US ambassador to the United Nations, according to the transition office.

The UN ambassador position will also be elevated to Cabinet-level status, sources noted to the NYT. Trump removed the ambassador seat from his Cabinet following Nikki Haley's 2018 exit from the position.

Thomas-Greenfield, who is a Black American woman, is expected to be one of many diverse nominees for Biden's cabinet.

Biden-Harris Administration to Prioritize 'Diversity of Ideology and Background'

"These individuals are equally as experienced and crisis-tested as they are innovative and imaginative," Biden argued in his Monday release. "Their accomplishments in diplomacy are unmatched, but they also reflect the idea that we cannot meet the profound challenges of this new moment with old thinking and unchanged habits -- or without diversity of background and perspective. It's why I've selected them."

Avril Haines, a former White House deputy national security adviser, was tapped as Biden's director of national intelligence. Haines became the first woman to serve as deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2013 and, if confirmed, will make history again as the first woman to ever head the [US Intelligence Community, which comprises 17 agencies](#).



Biden's transition office also confirmed reports that [former US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) and [Jake Sullivan](#) had been selected to serve on the Democrat's potential administration.

Blinken was tapped for US secretary of state, and Sullivan, formerly a senior policy adviser with Hillary Clinton's Department of State, received the nomination to serve as Biden's national security adviser.

Former US Secretary of State John Kerry was also picked by Biden to serve as special presidential envoy for climate. The 76-year-old Democrat publicly accepted the nomination via social media Monday.

"The transition — like the Biden-Harris administration to follow — will prioritize the following core values: diversity of ideology and background; talent to address society's most complex challenges; integrity and the highest ethical standards to serve the American people and not special interests; and transparency to garner trust at every stage," the [Biden-Harris transition website notes](#).

Trump Campaign Refusing Concession, Demands Georgia Recount

Despite the announcement, formal proceedings for the Biden-Harris campaign transition have yet to begin, as General Services Administration chief Emily Murphy has not signed the required letter of "ascertainment" to confirm a Democratic victory in the presidential race.

Furthermore, the Trump-Pence campaign still appears determined to continue its legal fight against alleged voter fraud.

"Today, the Trump campaign filed a petition for recount in Georgia. We are focused on ensuring that every aspect of Georgia State Law and the US Constitution are followed so that every legal vote is counted," the campaign argued in a [Saturday release](#) following the [state's certification of a Biden victory](#).

The Friday results announced by Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger revealed Biden received 49.5% of the votes in Georgia, [translating to a 12,000-vote victory](#) over his Republican rival, who received 49.3% of the vote.

Georgia law allows candidates to request a recount if the results are within 0.5%.

"Without signature matching, this recount would be a sham and again allow for illegal votes to be counted. If there is no signature matching, this would be as phony as the initial vote count and recount," the campaign stated.

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NASA Hopes China Shares Data Obtained During Chang'e Lunar Mission With Scientists

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - NASA said in a statement it hoped China would share data obtained during the Chang'e lunar mission.

"With Chang'e 5, China has launched an effort to join the U.S. & the former Soviet Union in obtaining lunar samples," NASA said on Twitter.

"We hope China shares its data with the global scientific community to enhance our understanding of the Moon like our Apollo missions did & the Artemis program will," it said.

On Monday, China launched the Chang'e 5 lunar lander, which is to land on the Moon and return samples of its soil to Earth. The mission is designed for 23 days. The device is expected to bring about 2 kilograms of lunar soil to Earth. If successful, the Chang'e-5 mission will be the first mission since the late 1970s to deliver regolith to Earth. Previously, only the Soviet Union and the United States managed to do this.

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#### **SpaceX Seeks License to Launch Starship Spacecraft - US Federal Aviation Agency**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - SpaceX has notified the US government that it plans to apply for licenses for suborbital and orbital launches of its Starship spacecraft at its launch site in Boca Chica, Texas, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in a statement. "SpaceX has informed the FAA that it plans to apply for licenses for suborbital and orbital launches of its Starship spacecraft powered by the Super Heavy rocket at its launch site in Boca Chica, Texas," the statement said on Monday.

The procedure, however, will fall outside of the scope of the existing final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision for the launch site and will require an additional environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the FAA said.

"The FAA is in the beginning stages of conducting the environmental review of the SpaceX proposal and ...intends to provide scoping information for the project soon. SpaceX is working with the FAA to prepare a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) which will be subject to the FAA's evaluation and approval," the statement added.

To receive the licenses, SpaceX must complete a safety review and develop agreements for the license application in addition to the environmental review, the FAA explained.

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#### **US General Services Agency Determines Biden Transition Team Can Access Resources - Letter**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The US General Services Administration (GSA) Administrator Emily Murphy in a letter to projected president-elect Joe Biden said she has determined his transition team can access post-election resources and services.

"I take this role seriously, and, because of recent developments involving legal challenges and certifications of election results, am transmitting this letter today to make those resources and services available to you," Murphy said in the letter on Monday.

Murphy said she made her decision independently and was never pressured by any White House officials to delay her decision.



President Donald Trump in a separate statement later in the day said he directed Murphy and her team to do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols.

Biden-Harris Transition Executive Director Yohanne Abraham said in a statement that the Biden transition team is set to begin meeting with US federal officials and conduct other meetings in the coming days now that the General Services Administration has allowed Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris to do so.

Earlier this month, US media reported that the White House had ordered all government agencies not to engage with Biden's transition team.

US media networks have projected Biden to be the winner of the November 3 presidential election. Trump has said he won the election but victory has been stolen from him via massive fraud and acts of impropriety.

Trump has sought recounts in several states and filed lawsuits in state and federal court, saying only legal votes should be counted and illegal votes should be discarded. Some states have said they found no evidence of substantial fraud and irregularities

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**Biden Team to Formally Begin Transition After GSA Approval - Statement**

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"In the days ahead, transition officials will begin meeting with federal officials to discuss the pandemic response, have a full accounting of our national security interests, and gain complete understanding of the Trump administration's efforts to hollow out government agencies," the release said on Monday evening.

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**Trumps Says US General Services Admin. Should Follow Protocol Regarding Biden Transition**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump issued a statement in which he recommended that the General Services Administration (GSA) head Emily Murphy and her team follow initial protocol with regard to his rival Joe Biden transition, but vowed to keep strongly fight election fraud and impropriety in the 2020 presidential election.

"Our case STRONGLY continues, we will keep up the good fight, and I believe we will prevail!" Trump said via Twitter on Monday. "Nevertheless, in the best interest of our country, I am

recommending that Emily and her team do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols, and have told my team to do the same."

#### UPDATE - Michigan Certifies US Presidential Election Results, Giving Biden 16 Electoral Votes

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Elections officials in the state of Michigan have voted to officially certify the results of the US 2020 presidential election, giving projected President-elect Joe Biden 16 electoral votes.

Michigan's Board of State Canvassers voted 3-0 to certify the results of the November 3 election, with both of the board's Democrats and one of its Republican voting in favor. The other Republican member of the board abstained from the vote.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued a statement in which she thanked the three Board of State Canvassers members for certifying the election results. However, Whitmer urged the Michigan residents to leave what she called was the drama of the elections behind and to focus on confronting the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Trump campaign senior legal adviser Jenna Ellis said in a statement that the certification is a procedural step and they will continue to fight any election fraud around the United States, adding that the final election results must be fair and legitimate.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson said that a post-election audit will be conducted after the final certification of the election winner according to ballots cast and counted.

US media networks have projected Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden to be the winner of the November 3 presidential election. President Donald Trump has said he won the election but victory has been stolen from him via massive fraud and acts of impropriety.

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#### **Trump Campaign Says Will Continue Fighting Election Fraud Despite State Certifications**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The Trump campaign will continue its legal fight against what it says was a massive election fraud and impropriety despite the fact that some US states have certified the results of the 2020 presidential election, Trump legal team senior adviser Jenna Ellis said in a statement.

"Certification by state officials is simply a procedural step," Ellis said on Monday evening. "We are going to continue combating election fraud around the country as we fight to count all the legal votes. Americans must be assured that the final results are fair and legitimate."

Earlier on Monday, the Michigan Board of State Canvassers voted 3-0 to certify the results of the November 3 election. Both of the board's Democrats and one Republican voted in favor of certifying the results. The other Republican board member abstained from the vote.

US media networks have projected Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden to be the winner of the November 3 presidential election. President Donald Trump has said he won the election but victory has been stolen from him via massive fraud and acts of impropriety.

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#### **Republican Senator Capito Says No Reason to Question Biden's Election Victory**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US Senator Shelley Capito said she believes there is no evidence of widespread irregularities and fraud in the 2020 presidential election to question Democratic nominee Joe Biden's victory.

"While some irregularities and fraud have been found and should be punished, there is no indication that these are widespread enough to call into question the outcome of the election. I firmly believe in our electoral system and in the power of the voice of the people," Capito, a Republican from West Virginia, said on Monday.

The senator said at some point the election must end and the window for legal challenges and recounts is rapidly closing as US states certify the election results in the coming days.

"If states certify the results as they currently stand, Vice President Joe Biden will be our next president and Senator Kamala Harris will be our next vice president," she said.

Capito promised to respect the certified results and to congratulate "our nation's new leaders, regardless of the policy differences I might have with them."

President Donald Trump has said he won the election but victory was stolen from him via massive election fraud and acts of impropriety. Trump has sought recounts in several states and

has launched lawsuits in state and federal courts. Some states have said they did not find evidence of substantial election fraud and irregularities.

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#### **Pennsylvania Supreme Court Rejects Trump Bid to Invalidate Ballots - Court Filing**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has rejected the Trump campaign's lawsuit to invalidate 8,329 mail-in ballots in Philadelphia, a court filing revealed.

"Guided by these principles and for the reasons discussed at length in this opinion, we conclude that the Election Code does not require boards of elections to disqualify mail-in or absentee ballots submitted by qualified electors who signed the declaration on their ballot's outer envelope but did not handwrite their name, their address, and/or date, where no fraud or irregularity has been alleged," the court said on Monday.

The court also reversed an order that invalidated 2,349 mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania's Allegheny County.

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Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson has said a post-election audit will be conducted after final certification of the winner according to ballots cast and counted.

Biden has been projected as the winner of November's presidential election by major US media outlets, having secured more Electoral College votes than incumbent Donald Trump, who has said he won and refused to concede, claiming massive vote theft.

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## Biden Discusses With European Commission Cooperation on Ukraine, Belarus - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Presumed President-elect Joe Biden held a telephone call with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during which he discussed the importance of bilateral cooperation on Belarus, Ukraine and the Western Balkans, his transition team said in a press release.

"The president-elect spoke with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and thanked her for her congratulations," the release said on Monday. "The president-elect expressed his belief that a strong European Union is in the United States' interest and underscored his commitment to deepen and revitalize the US-EU relationship... The president-elect also highlighted the importance of US-EU cooperation on issues of mutual concern, including Iran, Belarus, Ukraine and the Western Balkans."

Biden also held telephone discussions with the leaders of the European Council, Jordan and NATO, the release added.

US media have projected that Biden is the winner of the 2020 presidential election. However, President Donald Trump has said he won the election but victory was stolen from him via massive election fraud and acts of impropriety.

Trump has subsequently sought recounts in several states and launched legal challenges in state and federal courts. Some states have said they did not find evidence of widespread fraud and irregularities.

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## SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik)

### US POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

\* US House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal on Monday wrote a letter to General Services Administration (GSA) Administrator Emily Murphy urging her to promptly certify the November 3 presidential election.

\* Projected President-elect Joe Biden has selected Antony Blinken to be Secretary of State and Avril Haines to be Director of National Intelligence, his transition team announced.

\* Russia will wait for the official results of the US presidential election and the end of any court hearings before congratulating the winner, presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

### US WITHDRAWAL FROM OPEN SKIES TREATY

\* The Kremlin regrets the United States' withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty, which is an important part of the arms control system, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday.

\* The United Nations considers the United States' decision to formally withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty regrettable, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing.

### NAGORNO-KARABAKH CEASEFIRE

\* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has confirmed on Monday that relevant UN agencies are ready to cooperate with Russia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region to undertake humanitarian assessment on the ground, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said during a press briefing.



\* An officer of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh was wounded as a result of a mine explosion, an Azerbaijan soldier was killed and four more employees of the Emergencies Ministry of Nagorno-Karabakh were wounded, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

#### CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

\* Russia will add all coronavirus vaccines to the list of vital medications, whose prices are government-regulated, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said.

\* The first five volunteers aged over 60 years have received the first dose of Russia's coronavirus vaccine EpiVacCorona as part of the post-registration trials, the federal consumer rights watchdog, Rospotrebnadzor, told Sputnik.

#### TURKEY-RUSSIA S-400 DEAL

\* Ankara believes that political bargaining with the United States over purchasing Russia's S-400 air defense systems is unacceptable, since it procured the S-400 for protecting the national security, Omer Celik, the spokesman for the ruling Justice and Development Party, said on Monday.

\* Reports that Turkey allegedly decided that the purchase of Russian S-400 was erroneous are not true, a diplomatic source in Ankara told Sputnik.

#### RUSSIA-BELARUS COOPERATION

\* Russia and Belarus are forced to react to sanctions imposed by the European Union, and they coordinate the response measures, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko told Sputnik.

\* Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin said that next year, Belarusian-Russian exercises Zapad-2021 would be large-scale and would be held at five training grounds of the republic.

#### Biden to Nominate Janet Yellen as Treasury Secretary - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - President-Elect Joe Biden is to nominate former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen as treasury secretary, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

"President-elect Joe Biden plans to nominate former Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen, an economist at the forefront of policy-making for three decades, to become the next Treasury secretary," the Journal said, citing people familiar with the decision.

It added that, if confirmed by the Senate, Yellen would become the first woman to hold the job. Biden's selection positions the 74-year-old labor economist to lead his administration's efforts to drive the recovery from the destruction caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Yellen's pick comes as Biden named various other appointees to his cabinet, which will function after his inauguration on January 20.

The president-elect named Antony Blinken as secretary of state and Jake Sullivan to be national security adviser.

CNBC reported that Blinken, a long-time adviser to Biden, was well known in national security circles, developing a reputation as a pragmatic realist and a strong backer of multilateral institutions.

Sullivan, meanwhile, was a former top aide to Hillary Clinton and also served as a national security adviser to Biden during the Obama administration. He has previously said that effective US foreign policy was rooted in strong democratic institutions at home.

Biden also announced he will nominate former Secretary of State John Kerry as special presidential envoy for climate and place the post within the National Security Council, the first time a high-level envoy for climate has been formally part of the NSC.

The president-elect named Alejandro Mayorkas to lead the Department of Homeland Security and Avril Haines to be the director of national intelligence.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a career officer in the US Foreign Service, will be nominated to serve as the United Nations ambassador, a post that will be elevated to Cabinet level in the Biden administration.

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#### **US to Begin Rollout of New COVID-19 Treatment on Tuesday - Health Secretary**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The United States will begin distributing 30,000 doses of a new therapeutic against COVID-19 on Tuesday, US Health Secretary Alex Azar told reporters.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for Regeneron's investigational monoclonal antibody therapeutic cocktail – the experimental coronavirus treatment given to US President Donald Trump - on Saturday.

"Distribution will begin tomorrow," Azar said on Monday. "We expect to distribute about 30,000 doses of the Regeneron product tomorrow."

The health secretary added that he is expecting additional shipments within weeks.

The treatment is intended for COVID-19 patients over 12-years old experiencing mild to moderate symptoms but who are at risk of developing serious complications resulting in hospitalization and intensive care.

Medical experts said the hope is the drug stems the tide of hospitalizations, as the US remains mired in the second wave of the deadly pandemic.

Trump was treated with Regeneron's experimental drug in October, after he tested positive for COVID-19.



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**Google Invests \$1Mln in Stabilization Grant for Native-Owned Small Businesses - NCAI**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Google has invested \$1 million in funding to support small businesses owned by Native Americans impacted by COVID-19 pandemic, The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) announced in a release on Monday.

"The National Congress of American Indians is proud to announce its continued partnership with Google.org. Through this partnership, NCAI will oversee the Small Business Stabilization Grant – a \$1 million investment in Indian Country," the release said. "With the generous support from Google.org, NCAI is issuing business stabilization grants in the amount of \$5,000 each to a total of 170 Native-owned small businesses that have been severely impacted by the curtailing of commercial activity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."

The grants will help small businesses pay loans, salaries, and vendors and buy equipment, the release added.

The NCAI is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the US.

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**Biden to Nominate Janet Yellen as Treasury Secretary - Wall Street Journal**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Projected President-elect Joe Biden is set to nominate former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen as his treasury secretary, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, citing sources familiar with the decision.

If confirmed by the Senate, Yellen would become the first woman to hold the job. Mr. Biden's selection positions the 74-year-old labor economist to lead his administration's efforts to drive the recovery from the destruction caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

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**US House Committee Chairs Demand Briefing At Once on Trump-Biden Transition - Letter**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Democrats in Congress are insisting on being briefed immediately by the General Services Administration (GSA) on the delayed transition from the

Trump to the Biden administrations rather than waiting until next week, four House committee chairs said in a statement on Monday.

In order to unlock funding and resources for the presidential transition, the GSA must ascertain that projected president-elect Joe Biden and his Vice President Kamala Harris won the election. However, the agency is run by a political appointee of President Donald Trump, who has refused to concede.

"Today, Oversight and Reform Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney, Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, Oversight and Reform Committee's Government Operations Subcommittee Chairman Gerald Connolly, and Appropriations Committee's Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee Chairman Mike Quigley sent a letter insisting that GSA Administrator Emily Murphy brief them tomorrow on her ongoing refusal to grant the Biden-Harris Transition Team access to critical services and facilities specified in the Presidential Transition Act of 1963 and millions of dollars in funding that Congress appropriated on October 1, 2020, for transition activities under the Act," the release said.

Earlier in the day, the GSA told the four committees that its Deputy Administrator Allison Brigati would host a 30-minute briefing on Monday, November 30. However, the four committee leaders responded in their letter that such a delay was unacceptable to them.

"We cannot wait yet another week to obtain basic information about your refusal to make the ascertainment determination," the Chairs wrote. "Every additional day that is wasted is a day that the safety, health, and well-being of the American people is imperiled as the incoming Biden-Harris Administration is blocked from fully preparing for the coronavirus pandemic, our nation's dire economic crisis, and our national security."

The Chairs asked GSA to respond to their request today by 5:00 p.m. EST (9:00 p.m. GMT).

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US House Panel Chair Urges GSA Administrator to Certify Presidential Election - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal on Monday wrote a letter to General Services Administration (GSA) Administrator Emily Murphy urging her to promptly certify the November 3 presidential election.

"I write to call on you to immediately ascertain that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are the successful candidates for the office of President and Vice President," Neal, a Democrat from Massachusetts, wrote. "I call on you to put your fellow Americans before political expediency and immediately ascertain that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are the successful candidates for the office of President and Vice President."

Neal said the continued refusal to provide Biden's transition team with access to critical services and facilities outlined in the Presidential Transition Act of 1963 weaken's the new administration's ability to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"On November 7, 2020, nearly every major news organization declared President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris the clear winners of the election. Since then, there has been no



evidence to put those results into question, and Donald Trump has failed to prove any legal path to victory," the letter said. "Instead, the margin of victory has only grown, with President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris reaching 306 electoral college votes and nearly 6 million more votes than Donald Trump in the popular vote. In the face of these facts, it is unclear on what basis you continue to deny that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are the apparent successful candidates for the office of President and Vice President."

Biden has been projected as the winner of November's presidential election by all major US media outlets, having secured more Electoral College votes than incumbent Donald Trump, who has refused to concede, claiming massive vote theft. Trump has filed more than 30 lawsuits to halt vote certification, most of which have been dismissed or withdrawn.

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#### **Fauci Says He Expects AstraZeneca to Brief Him on Coronavirus Vaccine Tuesday**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci said that he expects to receive on Tuesday a briefing from the UK pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca on its newly developed coronavirus vaccine.

"I am going to be briefed no later than tomorrow morning by the company," Fauci said during an online interview with The Washington Post.

Earlier on Monday, AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford said the candidate coronavirus vaccine had shown an average of 70 percent efficacy in the trials, although one dosing regimen had shown to be 90 percent effective. AstraZeneca is the third Western vaccine manufacturer that has presented its phase 3 results, after Pfizer and Moderna, whose vaccines showed a 95 and 94.5 percent effectiveness rate, respectively.

"To have a 90 percent efficacy in one of the components... that's good news. What it tells us now is that it is the third vaccine that we have with a very high degree of efficacy which bodes well for vaccinology in general in the context of COVID-19," Fauci said.

Fauci added that it is important to have multiple highly effective vaccine candidates so that "these companies can start pumping out vaccine doses not only for the United States, but for the entire world."

In August, Russia became the first country to register a coronavirus vaccine, the Sputnik V. The vaccine is currently going through phase 3 trials in Russia, as well as in Belarus, the United Arab Emirates, India and Brazil. Sputnik V is 92 percent effective, based on data from the first 16,000 volunteers who have received both shots of the two-dose vaccine.

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#### **Fauci Says Had No Contacts With Biden After 2020 Election**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci said on Monday he has not spoken to presumed President-elect Joe Biden since the November 3 election.

"No, I have not," Fauci in replying to a question during an online interview with The Washington Post.

Fauci is a member of the Coronavirus Task Force established by President Donald Trump to coordinate efforts to combat the novel coronavirus.

Biden warned earlier that more Americans may die unless Trump concedes he lost the election and starts cooperating with the incoming administration.

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US Capital Re-Imposes Strict Coronavirus Measures, Limits Mass Gatherings

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser has issued guidance to re-impose strict coronavirus measures, including new limits on mass gathering on Monday, as the number of infection cases in the region continue to grow significantly.

Washington, DC and neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia have reported 5,039 residents that have tested positive for the coronavirus in past 24 hours.

The new measures will go in effect on Wednesday, November 25, a day before the Thanksgiving holiday.

"The limit for outdoor gatherings is reduced from 50 to 25 people. Indoor gatherings may not exceed ten people," the guidance said.

Houses or worship are exempt if they invite up to 50 people, but not more than 50 percent of their capacity, the guidance also said.



Restaurants may stay open until midnight but should end all indoor alcohol services by 10:00 p.m., while since December 14 they must limit maximum audience from 50 percent to 25 percent, the guidance added.

The local authorities said they "strongly encourage" non-essential businesses to continue teleworking.

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**US Starts Visa Bonds Pilot Program for Visitors From 23 Countries - State Dept.**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is starting a new visa bonds pilot program for visitors from 23 countries, including from Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Libya and Yemen, the US State Department said in a notice published in Federal Register on Monday. "The purpose of the pilot program is to assess the operational feasibility of posting, processing, and discharging visa bonds, in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to help assess the burden on government agencies and identify any practical challenges related to visa bonds," the notice said. "The pilot program will run for six months.

The State Department said the pilot program does not aim to assess whether issuing visa bonds will be effective in reducing the number of aliens who overstay their non-immigrant visas. Rather, the pilot program is a diplomatic tool to encourage foreign governments to take all appropriate actions to ensure their nationals timely depart the United States after making temporary visits, the State Department said.

"The amount of the bond, should a bond be appropriate, will be determined by the consular officer based on the circumstances of the visa applicant," the State Department added.

The program scheduled to start on December 24, according to the State Department.

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**Biden Picks Blinken to Be US Secretary of State - Transition Team**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Projected president-elect Joe Biden has selected Antony Blinken to be Secretary of State and Avril Haines to be Director of National Intelligence, his transition team announced on Monday.

Biden has chosen Alejandro Mayorkas to lead the Department of Homeland Security and Jake Sullivan to be his National Security Adviser.

Moreover, Biden will nominate Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be US Ambassador to the United Nations and top US diplomat John Kerry to be US Special Envoy for Climate.

Blinken held top-level national security and State Department positions during the administration of Barack Obama, working side-by-side with Biden.

According to The New York Times, Biden will announce more cabinet picks on Tuesday. Biden has been projected as the winner of November's presidential election by all major US media outlets, having secured more Electoral College votes than incumbent Donald Trump, who has refused to concede, claiming massive vote theft. Trump has filed more than 30 lawsuits to halt vote certification, most of which have been dismissed or withdrawn.

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#### **Two Congressmen Say Biden Must Reverse US Withdrawal From Open Skies Treaty Soon**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The administration of presumed President-elect Joe Biden should reverse the United States' pullout from the Open Skies Treaty as soon as possible, US Congressmen Eliot Engel and William Keating said in a statement on Monday. The United States' participation in the Open Skies Treaty ended on Sunday, six months after the Trump administration announced its intention to quit the agreement.

"Yesterday, President Trump completed his reckless campaign to withdraw the United States from the Treaty on Open Skies," the statement said. "[T]he incoming administration should begin the process of the United States' rejoining Open Skies as soon as possible, or look for alternative methods to share the critical information that will be lost to the United States and to our allies as a result of this withdrawal."

Engel and Keating pointed out that President Trump never notified Congress of his intent to withdraw the United States from the Open Skies Treaty was obliged to do so 120 days in advance under Section 1234 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. The two lawmakers also said there is a strong bipartisan support in the US Congress to achieve effective arms control agreements and expressed hope that the presumed new Biden administration will fix the damage the Trump administration's policies have wrought.



Earlier on Monday, Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow regrets the United States' withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty because it considers the accord to be an important part of the arms control system.

The Treaty on Open Skies allows its participants to carry out aerial surveillance as part of a program of scheduled observation flights. More than 30 countries are participating in the program created to boost transparency of military activities.

Trump confirmed the United States' withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty on May 21, citing what he called were violations by Russia and the country's alleged lack of compliance with the accord. Russia has denied all accusations.

Engel is chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee and Keating is chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment.

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#### Ex-US Security Officials Urge GOP Convince Trump To Concede, Launch Transition

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - More than one hundred former US national security officials in a joint statement on Monday urged the Republican Party leadership to demand that President Donald Trump concede his electoral defeat and immediately start a transition of power to projected winner Joe Biden.

"We believe that President Trump's refusal to concede the election and allow for an orderly transition constitutes a serious threat to America's democratic process and to our national security," ex-officials wrote. "We therefore call on Republican leaders – especially those in Congress – to publicly demand that President Trump cease his anti-democratic assault on the integrity of the presidential election."

Petitioners served in various capacities in Republican administrations under Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, Donald Trump or as Republican members of Congress. Among them are former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge and Director of the CIA Michael Hayden along with several former ambassadors and White House staffers.

"President Trump's continued efforts to cast doubt on the validity of the election and to interfere in state electoral processes undermine our democracy and risk long-term damage to our institutions," they warned. "President Trump's refusal to permit the presidential transition also poses significant risks to our national security, at a time when the US confronts a global pandemic and faces serious threats from global adversaries, terrorist groups, and other forces."

The Republican incumbent refuses to acknowledge his defeat to the Democratic rival who was proclaimed President-elect by major US media outlets. Trump seeks to overturn the results by filing lawsuits in key battleground states and accusing all-denying opponents of massive election fraud. Of 36 lawsuits filed to block vote certification, at least 24 have already been

denied, dismissed, withdrawn, or settled with no impact on the outcome, according to an NBC tally.

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#### **US Launches New Projects to Boost Skills in Military-Industrial Complex - Pentagon**

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The US government has awarded \$27 million to fund nine new prototyping projects as part of a major initiative to revive US industrial modernization, the Department of Defense announced in a press release on Monday.

"One of the most vital challenges for the US defense industrial base is the deficit in domestic manufacturing and engineering talent," the release said. "In order to address this problem head-on, the Defense Department recently awarded its first nine prototyping projects, valued at nearly \$27 million."

The awards will be given as part of a new "National Imperative for Industrial Skills" initiative, or "Skills Imperative," the release said.

"The awards are an initial step in reigniting US industrial modernization and to restoring the nation as the world's high-tech leader. ... These initial awards will build manufacturing prestige across the nation, with awards in Texas, Alabama, Missouri, Tennessee, Virginia, Illinois, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire," the release added.

The Skills Imperative will seek to organize a nationwide focus to provide needed workers for the industrial base, enabling the United States to build its next generation of combat ships, submarines, aircraft, ground vehicles, missiles, and other platforms and weapon systems, according to the release.

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#### **Powell, Mnuchin to Testify on Unused COVID-19 Relief Funds - US Senate Committee**

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will testify in Congress next week after the Treasury Department asked the central bank to return the unused funds from the COVID-19 relief package.

The Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs said in a statement that it will meet in open session on December 1 to conduct a hearing dubbed "the Quarterly Cares Act report to Congress."

"The witnesses will be: the honorable Steven T. Mnuchin, Secretary, Department of the Treasury; and the honorable Jerome H. Powell, chairman, board of governors of the Federal Reserve system," the statement said.

Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March in an attempt to overcome the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. The measure provided about \$3 trillion in grants and loans to US businesses and paycheck protection to qualifying citizens and permanent residents.

On Thursday, Mnuchin sent a letter to the Federal Reserve asking the central bank to down five emergency COVID-19 relief facilities and return the unused \$455 billion in relief funds. Powell has opposed the Treasury Department's demand to return the unused funds.

Mnuchin said his decision was based on Congress' original intent for unused funds to be returned issuing entity, which is the Treasury Department.

Mnuchin also said that in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Federal Reserve to recover the funds, the central bank may make such a request from the Treasury Secretary.

Federal Reserve officials said they have been surprised by Mnuchin's decision given that the central bank is still utilizing lending programs to provide COVID-19 relief aid.

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#### Trump Considers Implementing New Measures Against China - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump is considering implementing new measures against China in the next two months, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

The most ambitious step suggests creating an informal alliance of Western nations to push against China to limit its economic power, which Beijing uses to exert pressure on other countries, the report said.

That plan to create an alliance was sparked by China's economic pressure applied on Australia, the report also said.

Should China boycott a country's imports, the allied nations would consider joint efforts to resist such pressure, including provided relevant goods for purchase and compensations and imposing tariffs, the report explained.

The United States may also broaden its ban on imports from China's Xinjiang province, which uses forced labor according to Washington, and blacklist or impose restrictions on Chinese companies.

Joe Biden, whom the US media has projected to be the winner of the 2020 presidential election, said last week that he has no plans to strengthen the sanctions and tariffs the United States has imposed on China, but wants to ensure that Beijing respects established "bright lines."

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#### UNICEF Faces \$300 Million Funding Gap in Yemen - Executive Director



WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is facing a nearly \$300-million funding gap in conflict-torn Yemen, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore warned in a statement on Monday.

"Donors must step up and provide urgently needed additional funds. As we approach the end of the year, UNICEF's humanitarian appeal has received just US\$237 million of the US\$535 million required, a funding gap of almost US\$300 million," Fore said.

Fore noted that the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated an already dire situation in the country, where millions of children were already grappling with unrelenting conflict, severe malnutrition and a severe cholera outbreak.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has turned a deep crisis into an imminent catastrophe," Fore said. Eighty percent of the 24 million people in Yemen are in need of assistance, according to the United Nations.

Yemen has been engulfed in an armed conflict between the government forces, led by President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, and the Houthi movement since 2014. In December 2018, the warring parties signed a UN-backed agreement in Sweden. The sides agreed to a ceasefire in Al Hudaydah, an exchange of prisoners and establishment of humanitarian corridors in the area. The prisoner swap process still continues, so do clashes, drone attacks and airstrikes in the conflict-hit country.